WHIRRAKEE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
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Office Bearers for 2015 - 2016

President	*vacant*	
Vice President	Alistair White	0419 613 737
Secretary/Public Officer	Matt Comer	0409 162 627
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	

Positions delegated by the Committee

Minute Secretary	Anne Bridley (for general meetings)	
Excursion sub-committee	**John Lindner**, Simon Hay, Richard Goonan	**5448 3406**
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	Jess Milroy	
Garden sub-committee	Kerrie Norris, Jess Milroy	
Observations coordinator	Jenny Shield	
Supper coordinators	Alistair White, Jess Milroy	
Hall management sub-committee	**Maurie Lewis**, Rob & Glenise Moors, Ben Goonan	**0407427179**
Whirrakee sub-committee	Sabine Wilkens, Alistair White, John McCallum, Ben Goonan	
Whirrakee contact/editor	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Jenny Shield	
Website sub-committee	Ben Goonan, **John McCallum**	**54439347**

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $40; Family $50; Concession: Single $35; Family $40. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $40.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Hall, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with members sharing their recent natural history observations. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Devi Shanty, Simon Hay, John McCallum, Richard Goonan, Karen Thomas, Jess Milroy

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Hall, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Hall. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188. To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 37, No. 5, June 2016
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*), which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
The planting day on Sunday 22nd May, represented by the front cover photo, was a wonderfully organised day. See below for more information. Many thanks to the Heritage Advisory Committee and the Club, especially Matt Comer for all the effort and bringing on the perfect weather to go with the music and the planting. Peter would have loved it! Other big news was the recent reporting of a wombat in Golden Square. Page 5 has the photos to prove it. It will add interest for the newly activated mammal group who already has plenty of projects lined up...why not join them?

Front page photograph: by Sabine Wilkens
The photo shows Matt Comer (representing BFNC) and councillor Peter Cox (representing the Bendigo Heritage Advisory Committee) planting an *Allocasuarina verticillata* in the Club garden. The occasions was a jointly planned memorial planting, organized by the two organisations in memory of Peter Ellis who died one year ago. Other organisations present on the occasion were the wonderful Emu Creek Bush Band, the City of Greater Bendigo, DELWP and the National Trust as well as numerous club members, friends and family. The Drooping She-oak was chosen as a specimen tree for Peter as it originates from the Spring Gully area where Peter lived and campaigned for many conservation goals we benefit from today. The she-oak and many other plants (and labor in getting the site ready) were donated by DELWP/CoGB as well as individual members and with the subsequent and perfectly timed rain after the planting, the club garden should be a wonder to see in the springs to come.

Short Notices

BFNC Wild Weekly Walks – Nature Knowledge Exchange,
Excursions, 9am-12pm Saturdays
Meet at 8:50am at the Golden Square Hall to attend. Please carry with you some water and a light snack, along with clothing suitable for the prevailing conditions. Walks will be short and of easy to moderate difficulty, suitable for anyone with a basic level of fitness.
The excursions in **June** are currently planned for **4th of June,** and the **11th of June.**

Call Richard on 0423418815 or email richard.goonan@optusnet.com.au to find out more or check the club's website at www.bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au for the latest updates.

Naturalist Workshops
Throughout the year the Club has been running a series of Naturalist Workshops specifically designed to develop participants' proficiency across a broad range of field based naturalist skills and knowledge. They are designed to cater for a wide range of abilities and use a participatory/ interactive model where participants learn from one another in a friendly and welcoming environment.

Workshop 7: Identifying eucalypts and recognizing the vegetation communities they signify
Presenter: Ben Goonan
Date: 22/06/2016
Time: 7:00pm, Golden Square Hall
RSVP: Please register your interest via info@bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au or by post to PO Box 396 Bendigo VIC 3552.
What to bring: Enthusiasm! and images if you have any, your field guides and notes, paper and pen, your laptop or phone to use apps, etc.
More information:
www.bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au or info@bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au

Nest Box Inspection Excursion 24th April

by Karen Thomas

A most beautiful autumn day to be out in the Box Ironbark environment for the club's "Nest Box Inspection" excursion last month...
Two sites were checked in the GBNP:
Boxes in the first site that were installed in the early 2000s are in need of repair/replacement. A future project! Of the 9 boxes inspected: 3 boxes had old tuan nest material and 1 contained fresh green leaves.
All 12 boxes in the second site were in good condition and had been used.
1 box occupied by a tuan
10 boxes filled with tuan nesting material
1 box occupied by a sugar glider

Some of the birds identified on the day: Galah, Musk Lorikeet, Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Crimson Rosella, Eastern Rosella, Fairy-wren, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, Weebill, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Yellow Thornbill, Red Wattlebird, Noisy Miner, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Scarlet Robin, Eastern Yellow Robin, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Dusky Woodswallow, Australian Magpie, Grey Currawong, Australian Raven, Mistletoebird, Welcome Swallow.
A total of 34...
Thanks to all who made it a fun and successful outing ...see photos on page 4

Regular Fauna Excursions
You might remember this activity from some time ago…
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains Street, Golden Square. Phone Maurie (0407 427 179) to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30, then the excursion is not on.

Travelling to Queensland and Cape York

by John Lindner

I last went to Queensland in 2009, and have been pretty keen to get back there ever since. The plants and animals (especially birds) are incredibly interesting, along with the very serious agricultural and pastoral industries which occupy vast areas. The histories and economic circumstances of the large isolated towns are also of note. I will be passing through central NSW and Queensland, and visiting Don Franklin at Herberton on the Atherton Tableland. Don lived in Bendigo long ago and was the principal author of "The Eucalypts of Bendigo". On Cape York, we hope to visit Iron Range and Lakefield National Parks, before staying on Horn Island with a friend who is currently working for the Torres Strait Authority. The intention of my brief reports will be to provide some natural history highlights of the trip (see photo on left).

Part 1: Leopard wood (*Flindersia maculosa*), just north of St. George, southern Queensland. As you travel north, you pass almost imperceptibly from one biological zone into another. But the boundaries between the zones are blurred. So many southern species occur in the north [illegible] know you are in a new biogeographical zone. Leopard-wood is a completely new species - jig-saw patter-ned bark, pendulous branches and very small leaves – a new beauty to admire (…to be continued)

Below and right: There was beautiful sunshine during the nest box excursion on April 24 (Photographer: Karen Thomas)

More Mammals ... above and below ground

Left: Maurie Lewis (in 2015) erecting a new PVC nest box for trial (photo by Kerrie Norris)

Below are photos of a Wombat borrow, discovered in the creek line at at Golden Square by Luke Shaw from CoGB on the second of May. The black and white photos below are from the automatic night-vision camera set-up in front of the burrow.

Thanks to Ami Greenfield for sending the hard evidence of this unusual and very exciting sighting

Autumn is fungi season: Here are some fungi from Springs Road Mandurang. The recent rain has finally started the fungi moving, let's hope for more, says Joy Clusker (the photographer).

Left: *Mycena nargan*

Top right: Laccarias

Bottom right: *Macrolepiota clelandii*

Above: : *Gymnopilus junonius*

Simon Smith thought the male Flame Robin (left photo) was pretty attractive – he was on the exposed flats near the shore of Crusoe Reservoir, in the vicinity of the pine plantation. There had been male Scarlet and Red-capped Robins at the same location a fortnight earlier, so it's a good spot to visit at this time of year. (photographed on May 9)

Below: Also highly attractive are the eggs sacs of the bird dropping or bird dung spider, *Celaenia excavata*, which Anne Bridely found in a little pile on the ground near Round Creek, Kamarooka forest on May 21

This amazing jaw was spotted on one of the Saturday morning walks, at Junorton, at the Fieldnats reserve. Joy Clusker photographed it and has identified it as the bottom jaw of a lizard, possibly a Shingle back. What a find!

Observations from May meeting via Jenny Shield

Ami Greenfield 2 May 2016
Gateway Park, Wombat filmed, burrow and scats (see photos on page 5)

Glenise Moors 11 May 2016
555 Mandurang South Rd, Sedgwick; There are still ten "seedlings" with green attachments plus another four that have just started to send out a tiny bump between the split in the attachment. The two "seedlings" previously reported now have clumps of leaves more than 10mm long.

Phil Robertson, May 2016
Sedgwick State Forest; Wedge tailed eagle's nest. Fairly new – perhaps last year. Eagles seen in the area early May too!

Marian Hill, Early May 2016
Casley Street, Long Gully; Grey Currawongs showing up in ones and twos in the last week or two. Flocks of Silvereyes also from the start of May.

Fauna Group Meeting 4th May 2016

by Kerrie Norris

With a small room full of people keen to talk about fauna specifically, the first meeting in over a decade was off to a fine start. Brush-tailed Phascogales (Tuans) and Sugar Gliders in the local area became the topic of much animated conversation after viewing footage of their nocturnal behaviours caught on infra-red motion sensor camera. This was followed by a visual outline of the Nest box Project undertaken by several members in the past 18 months to:

- Digitalise and centralise current and historical records of the BFNC Mammal Survey/Fauna Group nest box survey sites.
- Target species: Brush-tailed Phascogale (Tuan) *Phascogale tapoatafa* (vulnerable) - Monitor a habitat friendly corridor developed by the Sheepwash Creek Landcare Group that links three nestbox sites (established by BFNC and other environmental groups over past 20+ years) in the One Tree Hill and Mandurang Blocks of the National Park
- Engage with community and local governing authorities to support and provide data for the protection of native wildlife and associated habitat.

Continuing with the theme of hollow dependent fauna and a wonderful collection of images, elders such as Cynthia and Rob Watkins, Bill Holsworth and Maurie Lewis were on hand to describe some of their personal highlights and observations, along with how different eras of BFNC members have created and managed the nest box sites.
Ami G. reported the sighting of a Common Wombat *Vombatus ursinus* (today) in the creek system of Gateway/Rotary Park Kangaroo Flat. Certainly not common marsupials to be seen in central Victoria, but from numerous other accounts over recent years seem to be increasing.
The meeting concluded with Cynthia presenting a fresh specimen of, tail and attached hind fur of a small mammal found near Kennington reservoir this morning. The colour of fur and tail seemed similar to the museum specimen of Yellow-footed Antechinus).
The next meeting will be on Wednesday 1st June, 7-9pm at the clubrooms. All welcome

N.B. Maurie Lewis is starting his regular Friday morning nest box excursions/ inspections again - see notice on page 3.

A Saturday excursions to Salomon Gully
April 16th, 2016 by Richard Goonan

The first weekly naturalist walk in the club's new series of excursions visited Salomon Gully Flora Reserve. Starting the walk from the southern car park, the group slowly made their way up toward the main ridge along the western boundary. Leaving the car park, we noted a patch of senescing long-unburnt *Melaleuca decussata*. The formerly dense patch is now relatively open with a thick layer of dead woody debris covering the ground. This litter layer prevents seedling recruitment

so the patch is slowly dying without replacement. In contrast, slightly further along in this lower part of the reserve there was a small bushfire during the 1990's that lead to thick regrowth of *Melaleuca decussata* seedlings, which has created a dense stand of even aged recruits. More recently, a planned burn conducted in 2013 has created some 'new' open patches among this *Melaleuca* regrowth, providing an excellent habitat mosaic with areas of both thick (unburnt) shrubs and open (burnt) grassy areas adjacent. Amongst the new areas of open grassy habitat that had previously been covered by dense even aged *Melaleuca* regrowth, the abundant young *Melaleuca* seedlings now growing provide a more diverse age range of recruitment across the larger overall patch. This means that in the long term, the overall patch will provide a better range of habitats as each sub-patch represents a different stage of maturity (e.g. 1 - senescing long-unburnt with dense litter layer, 2 - medium age dense recruitment with few other species, 3 - open areas with new seeling recruitment and other species abundant). Within the open grassy habitat patch (burnt area), an Eastern Striped Skink, *Ctenotus robustus* was observed on a shallow rocky outcrop. The dense litter underneath the unburnt *Melaleuca*, and deep shade among the regrowth, often excludes other plants and is likely unsuitable for species such as *Ctenotus*. Fortunately the *Ctenotus* and plant species present are able to take advantage of the open habitat created by the burn. While looking through these areas other skinks, *Lampropholis guichenoti* (6) *Morethia boulengeri* (1) were also found.

Why are observations of common species important? Along the lower section of the walk, the group observed an active wild Bee hive in the ground underneath a large Ironbark. While such an observation may be generally regarded as mundane, the importance of recording these things was highlighted in a recent edition of the Bowerbird Newsletter. Despite their common and widespread occurrence, distribution records of the Honey Bee (particularly wild hives) are limited and incomplete. Bowerbird users have been asked to contribute to better understanding Honey Bee distribution by recording such observations. Once added to Bowerbird, these new observations are aggregated with existing nationwide data to form an improved understanding. Over time this improved data can be used to monitor change, so even 'common' sightings are valuable and anyone with an interest can make an effective contribution.

Despite the dry start to autumn, as the group made their way toward the main ridge there was much to observe and engage a naturalist's interest. In contrast to areas of local forest that are long unburnt, the recently burnt section of Salomon Gully contains an abundance of new growth and recruitment across many plant species and particularly positive responses from *Philotheca verrucosa* and *Acacia ausfeldii*. The local kangaroos also appear to like the Kangaroo Grass, Spear Grass and Wallaby Grass species growing abundantly, stimulated by the burn, and they have been browsing some patches quite heavily. While it would be concerning to see this continue to occur on a broader scale, this browsing also represents another ecological disturbance process that facilitates dynamic changes in habitat structure and availability over time. As long as the browsing doesn't continue to remove or disturb too much of the overall area, it provides another example of a dynamic mosaic pattern. Hence this highlights the importance of repeated ongoing observation and monitoring by naturalists (and land managers!) to observe and record these changes over time and understand the processes involved. Nothing stays the same (e.g. senescing *Melaleuca*), so it's important to appreciate the role of disturbance and change in natural systems and how plants and animals respond.

Several bird species seen or heard throughout the day included Red Wattlebird, Weebill, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, Musk Lorikeet, Magpie, White-eared Honeyeater, Grey Fantail, Superb-fairy Wren, Rufous Whistler, Mistletoe Bird, and Eastern Rosella. Rainbow Lorikeets have now established

populations in Bendigo and a group appear to be regularly around Salomon Gully.
Since before the planned burn at Salomon Gully, I have visited the area at regular intervals and my observations reveal an intriguing picture of the way different plants respond to drought and fire. Following this year's dry spring, summer and autumn, some of the dense recruitment, particularly *Daviesia ulicifolia, Acacia pycnantha* and *Acacia ausfeldii,* has 'thinned out' with some die-off. Some individuals that appear dead, may yet survive with some already resprouting, and others only being partly affected (some *Hakea* spp are also known to respond in this way). Over the long term however, many will inevitably die due to this dry spell or others following. What's important is that enough survive to maintain the seed bank for the next disturbance and recruitment cycle, and this appears to be occurring. The ecosystem is functioning and able to accommodate the temporary disturbance caused by the fire, new habitats have been created and new recruitment has been stimulated. The plant populations that had been severely degraded following the millennium drought period have been rejuvenated.

Fungi excursion to Mt Macedon, Sunday 19 th June 2016...
(note change from earlier advertised date)

Location Sanitorium Lake, Mount Macedon
Leader Joy Clusker
Meeting Point BFNC clubrooms
Departure time 8.30 am
Return time Probably between 4.00 and 5.00 pm.
Mode of travel Members' cars with car-pooling to minimize vehicles. Passengers will be asked to contribute to the cost of fuel.

Car travel details 1. Golden Square, Harcourt, Kyneton, Woodend, Macedon. This is about 90 km.
2. Directions from south of Woodend: leave freeway at Black Forest Drive, and at 0.75 km turn in to Nursery Road which will take you into the village of Macedon (a further 1.0 km)
3. Directions from Macedon village: from the main street (Smith Street), proceed 1.75 km along Honour Avenue to Mount Macedon Rd. Turn left and proceed for about 6.5 km to the turnoff to the right to Lions Head Road and Barringo Road. A short distance along Lions Head Road, stop at Day's Picnic Ground.

Map A map of sections 2. and 3. above will be provided.
Walking From Day's Picnic Ground, we will walk about 1.0 km to Sanatorium Lake.
Activities Identification and photography Lunch at the picnic ground or the lake.
Weather The excursion will not be cancelled if it is merely showering or cold. We will only cancel, if it is absolutely bucketing down.
What to bring Mount Macedon is a much cooler and wetter area than Bendigo. Fungi love rain and coolness, and look their best in those conditions; so please come well prepared

- Clothing – warm stuff in layers, with beanie and gloves.
- Waterproofs – rain jacket and overpants if possible.
- Boots.
- Food – morning and afternoon tea, lunch, hot drinks in thermos.
- Seat – bring a folding chair or foam mat.
- Observing and recording fungi – camera, tripod, field guides, dental mirror to examine the hidden parts of fungi more easily, note book, plastic sheet to lie on the ground when taking photos
- Umbrella - can be handy if there are showers.
- Salt – this can be handy to remove the odd leech.
- Backpack for your gear.

Family Nature Club
The Nature Club activities will continue in 2016, so look out for announcements or check out their website. **Registration:**
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326
http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Hall, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, 8th June **7.30pm**
Mr. Tim Entwisle, Director and Chief Executive, Honorary Professorial Fellow (University of Melbourne), Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria
"*Entwisleia bella*, new Australian algal genus more significant than Wollemi Pine?"
A very intriguing title...All are welcome

Excursions
Fungal excursion to Mt Macedon
Sunday 19th June See page 10 for details

New regular Saturday excursion activities
Contact Richard on 0423418815 or email richard.goonan@oprtusnet.com.au
Excursions for June are planned as follows:
4th June – destination to be determined
11th June – destination to be determined
See page 3 for what to bring and more details

Regular Fauna Excursions
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone Maurie (0407 427 179) to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30, then the excursion is not on.

BFNC Workshop, 22nd June **7.00pm**
Workshop 7: Identifying eucalypts and recognizing the vegetation community they signify. Leader: Ben Goonan. See page 3.

Bendigo Native Plant Group meeting.
All interested people are welcome to come along. Meeting starts at 7:30pm on the third Tuesday of the month, Golden Square Hall. The next meeting is on the 21st June.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.
WRIN meetings held on the 1st Saturday of **every second month** (February, April, June, August, October, December) at 1pm the Golden Square Hall

Summary of Committee business from the meeting of 18 May 2016.

- The Club's Risk Management document has now been drafted and revised and is nearly complete. Importantly for members it includes risk-assessment templates for the various kinds of activities the Club is likely to be involved in, with the express purpose of making this task easy for leaders and organisers to complete. The document is available from the Secretary or via the Excursion Sub-committee.
- Work on Policies and Procedures documents is ongoing
- Establishment of guidelines for the Club making donations to other organisations will be included in a sub-committee meeting to discuss overall financial policy.
- The City of Greater Bendigo have requested the Club to sign an agreement with them regarding our role as Committee of Management for the Golden Square Hall. The agreement will be examined by the Committee and a decision will be made as to our position. The agreement formalises our current arrangements but also changes some working arrangements and will need careful consideration.
- Another on-going issue with the hall includes working with Council to formalise the adoption of a new name for the hall.
- The Committee would like to know of any books members think may be worth considering for the Library. Do you have a suggestion?